NOVA®

#3 LOVENESS • PÉREZ • HERRING

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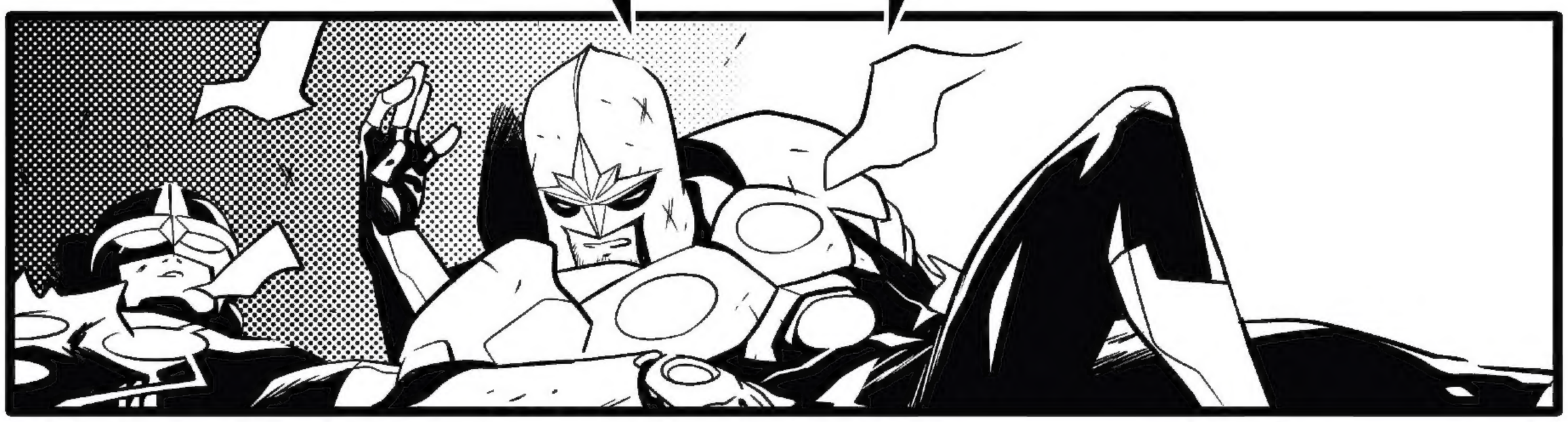
NOVA



SAM ALEXANDER'S FATHER WAS ONCE A MEMBER OF THE INTERGALACTIC PEACEKEEPING TASKFORCE CALLED THE NOVA CORPS. BUT AFTER HIS FATHER MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED, SAM TOOK UP THE NOVA MANTLE AND HAS SEARCHED THE COSMOS FOR HIM EVER SINCE.

WHEN A SIGNAL ANNOUNCED THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER NOVA ON EARTH, SAM RACED TO ITS POINT OF ORIGIN. THERE, HE FOUND THE LONG-DEAD NOVA CORPS SOLDIER RICHARD RIDER, SOMEHOW ALIVE AND WELL, EMBROILED IN A BATTLE WITH A FACELESS, SEETHING EXTRATERRESTRIAL ORGANISM. THEY WERE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE MONSTER, BUT SAM REMAINS WARY OF RICHARDS'S MYSTERIOUS RESURRECTION.

LOOKING TO GET BACK INTO THE SWING OF THINGS, RICH AND SAM VISITED THE SPACE STATION CALLED KNOWHERE. IT WASN'T ALL REST AND RELAXATION, THOUGH, AS A TRIO OF DEADLY BOUNTY HUNTERS GOT THE DROP ON THE NOVAS – WHO APPARENTLY HAVE HIGH-PAYING BOUNTIES ON THEIR HEADS!

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I've done it plenty...

...but shooting a Nova *NEVER* gets old.

And not just *any* Nova.

CHK!

Kid. Get up--

Kid? Sam?

Richard Rider. The guy who made the rest of the Corps feel like nothing.

Titus, my ocular and sensory data are in conflict. Something is--

I know we're supposed to hand these helmets over...

...but I think I'm going to keep this one for myself.

...What happened?

Dobryj Vyechyer, gentlemen.

BLAM

I am Cosmo.

I am in brain.

AUURGGH! Psi-shields up!

CHAK

Greetings, Cosmo. Non-organic brain has its benefits, yes?

Goodnight, canine friend--

ZRACH

YELP

CHAK

You can shoot *me* as much as you want...

...but don't kick a good dog when he's down.

So... whose asses are we about to kick?

Our names are unimportant. Our employer requires only the Nova helms resting upon your heads. *You* are optional, dead or alive.

Whatever.

I don't know the over-chromed robot in the middle, but the guy on the right is Chitauri.

The tiger dude on the left is Titus. I thought I accidentally killed him, y'know, dead.

We know how well *that* sticks, kid.

How's your father, little Nova? Still lost in the stars?

Or maybe he just never cared enough to bother coming back.

AHHH!

KRAK

I am SO sick of you!

POW

Get the hell out of my life, Tony the Tiger!

Heh.

Your father hit harder.

ZRAK

One down.

FLASH

First the dog.

KRAK

KRAK

Not cool.

TOSS

Then the kid.

Attacking two members of the Corps in a crowded space station.

Great plan, guys.

Thought you ≠TIK≠ might give us trouble.

On to Plan B, yes?

Hand over the ≠TIK≠ Nova helmets--or everyone on Knowhere ceases to exist, eh?

FZZT

ZAPT

Big threat for a robot sparking out of his face.

Also--was that a ***Canadian*** accent? How'd you even get that in space?

Not a threat. A ***promise.***

Knowhere is built inside an old ≠TIK≠ Celestial head.

Took some ≠TIK≠ precautions we did, yes.

VZZZ

There's unimaginable cosmic energy coursing through a Celestial brain.

What do you think will ≠TIK≠ happen when we blow it up, eh?

Hand over those helmets...

≠TIK≠

...or we find out.

What... what do we do?

If we give these up, you'll leave Knowhere and everyone on it alone?

This is ≠TIK≠ business. My employer has been after your Black Nova helmet for a long time, Alexander.

You've kept him waiting long enough.

And I think even ***you*** know you're done pretending to be your father.

I knew him. He wasn't worth the effort.

...Give it to him.

Hold on, kid.

Cosmo, you got us patched in?

Da.

Good boy.

What's... Are you in my head?

Fine. You win. But remember-- You may take our helmets... but you'll never take... our freedom--

Wait. Are you giving them the Braveheart speech?

What? You think Tony the Tiger's seen it? I'm stalling. It's hard to come up with a plan and stall at the same time.

--and with great power, comes great responsibility.

Doesn't Spider-Man say that?

Constantly. Guy never shuts up about it.

Cosmo-- you find that bomb yet?

Nyet.

Must be the **psi-shields**. They're blocking you. Scan everyone and everything in this damned Celestial skull-- find the blank spot. That's where they are.

Done.

Send it to Sam.

Me?

Kid--you've got a **Black Nova** helmet. You're faster than me.

I'm gonna hold 'em off before they give the order.

But if I can't-- I need you up there.

Drop 'em before they can fire that thing off.

I... maybe we should just give them the helmets? I mean--that's all they want? Aren't we being selfish?

I don't want anyone to die because of me...

Kid, listen. That helmet is one of the most dangerous weapons in the universe. If you give it up, a lot more people are going to die.

Being a Nova means you gotta step up. You take the risks others can't.

So step up.

Oh, he's done. Anything left to say?

KRAK

"They're grrrrrreat!"

Wha-- UURURGGH!

Prepare to detonate on my ≥TIK≤ mark--

GO, KID!

SLASH

SHRRRIPP

KLOK

POW

FWOOSH

HISSS

ARGH!

Chitauri warriors! You've got incoming!

TWIST

'Scuse me!

Sorry!

Looking for the Celestial's brain!

Rich! RICH! I FOUND THE BOMB!

The boy is there! Detonate now!

Great plan.

But you should've stayed dead, Rider.

Who said I didn't?

Definitely not in the contract. Evacuate, yes.

RICH! I'm too late! I'm sorry!

Sam...

Sam. I'm on my way! Hold it back.

I can't stop it!

You've got the Nova Force, kid.

Use it!

I—I can't.

Yes, you can.

It's energy.

There's... There's too much—

Reach out. Hold it back!

Easy, kid.

I've got your back.

Did we win?

Yeah, we did okay.

TOK

TOK

Flarking Novas...

Hey, Syk.

Still got that drink for me?

Can't wait for you to die again...

Love you, too!

And a Shirley Temple for Sam here. I'd say he's earned it.

So. You gonna ask that girl out or what?

What girl?

Lina. The girl who makes your brain scream.

Oh. Uh. I dunno. We haven't... I was really weird around her.
Everyone in high school is weird. Just go with it.
What if she says no?
Then she says no. You go live your life.
Yeah, but wh--
Look, kid. I'm not a life expert. I'm not a cool, genius Tony Stark guy.
But I *have* been dead.
And looking back...
...I wish I had talked to more girls.
...What was it like? Being dead?
Boring.
But I'm back now.
Not everyone gets that chance.
So I'm gonna live like hell.
"Which reminds me...

"...there's a girl I should talk to."

NEXT: GAMORA!

NEXT

GROUNDED WITH GAMORA

ZONE